

Improving Worksite Stairwells



Would you like to be more active during the workday without having to leave work? You can! Taking the stairs is a great way to add physical activity to your day. And it's free!

STEPS TO SUCCESS

1. Work with your Wellness Committee. Would your worksite benefit from improving your stairwells? And from promoting their use?
2. Make a plan. Read through this tool to find out how to make your stairwells safe places to walk.
3. Work with management to make the changes.
4. Get workers on board. Let them know about the improvements. Educate them on the value of getting physical activity by taking the stairs.
5. Routinely evaluate your stairwell program. Make changes as needed.

TOOL TIPS

Stairwell Basics

Make your stairwells safe and enjoyable. Be sure the following elements are in place:

- Only staff should be able to get in the stairwells from outside.
- Stairwells should be well lit and feel safe. Install mirrors and video cameras, if needed.
- They should be well maintained — no broken

doors, steps, handrails, or tripping hazards. The steps should have non-slip treads.

- Stairwells and handrails should be cleaned often.

Get Staff to Take the Stairs

Your stairwells are safe to use. Now how do you get workers to use them? Here are some ideas:

- Educate staff on the benefits of taking the stairs. It is physical activity, which helps with weight loss and overall good health.
- Help staff get started by encouraging them to take the stairs instead of the elevator once a day.
- Encourage all workers to participate, from management to maintenance. Each person can model healthy living and support one another.
- Have a fun competition. Measure one flight of stairs. Figure out how many flights it would take to climb the Empire State Building. Provide staff with a paper to track their progress. Or try a larger goal, like Mt. Everest. Staff can work in teams.
- Provide prizes! Something as simple as a ribbon or sticker can be a good incentive. Recognize employees in a newsletter. A little recognition can be really encouraging.

- Team up with colleagues to start a “Stairwell Club.” The team members can encourage one another.
 - Take the stairs for physical activity when the weather is bad outside.
 - Make charts for the break room or stairwells where members can track the number of flights they’ve taken.
 - Recognize club achievements in newsletters.
- Post signs near the elevator. You can find some to print at the *Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Branch—Worksite Program* webpage at www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Pages/WorksiteFitBusinessKit.aspx.
- Or create your own signs. Here are some examples:
 - That’s one small step for me. One giant leap toward good health.
 - Do some reps... take the steps.
 - For a better today and a healthier tomorrow.
 - Physical activity will add years to your life, and life to your years.
 - Raise your fitness level one step at a time.
 - Sneak activity into your daily routine.
 - Step up to a healthier lifestyle.
 - Small steps make a big difference.
 - The cheapest gym anywhere... the stairs!
 - The victory is not always to the swift, but to those who keep moving.
 - There are 1440 minutes in every day... schedule 30 of them for physical activity.
 - Your heart needs exercise. Here’s your chance.
- We are what we repeatedly do. (Aristotle)
- In one minute a 150 pound person burns approximately 10 calories walking up the stairs, and 1.5 riding the elevator.¹
- Change posters and messages often.
- Provide music in the stairwells.
- Add color! Paint the walls in the stairwell a happy color. Or ask gifted staff or local artists to paint a mural.
- Rename the stairwells as “The Fitness Zone.” Use this name on signs and in the newsletter. Add signs to stairwell doorways: “YOU ARE NOW ENTERING THE FITNESS ZONE.”
- Put footprints on the floor that lead from the elevator to the stairs. Have a message spelled out along the way.



Attribute: Poster from Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Healthier Worksite Initiative
http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/hwi/downloads/stairwell_messages.pdf

¹ Ainsworth BE, Haskell WL, Herrmann SD, Meckes N, Bassett Jr DR, Tudor-Locke C, Greer JL, Vezina J, Whitt-Glover MC, Leon AS. 2011 Compendium of Physical Activities: a second update of codes and MET values. *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*, 2011;43(8): 1575-1581
<https://sites.google.com/site/compendiumofphysicalactivities>, accessed 2/24/2014.

GO FURTHER

- Stairwells are a great place to be physically active, but it's important to use caution. Here are a few tips to share with your employees:
 - o Advise employees to consult with their doctors before increasing the amount or intensity of physical activity or beginning a vigorous exercise program.
 - o Always use the handrail.
 - o Keep your eyes on the stairs at all times.
 - o Take one step at a time.
 - o Never stop on a landing to converse with someone or congregate right outside a door at the top or bottom of a stairwell.
- Work with management to create policies that care for safe stairwells and promote their use.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Visit our website at www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Pages/WorksiteProgram.aspx for:

- sample posters.
- printable handouts.
- more information.



ATTRIBUTES

Physical Activity and Nutrition Coordinating Committee (PANCC), Issue Memo—Promoting Stairwell Use in the East End Complex, California Department of Public Health internal/unreleased document, 2003.



This material was produced by the California Department of Public Health's Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Branch with funding from USDA SNAP-Ed, known in California as CalFresh. These institutions are equal opportunity providers and employers. CalFresh provides assistance to low-income households and can help buy nutritious food for better health. For CalFresh information, call 1-877-847-3663. For important nutrition information, visit www.CaChampionsForChange.net.

